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FROM THE COEUR D'ALENE PRESS

Making the grade

Posted: Thursday, Dec 04, 2008 - 10:26:13 pm PST

Email this story Printer friendly version By MAUREEN DOLAN

Staff writer

SHAWN GUST/Press

Jake Gerringer, in blue, and Patrick Crabb, both freshmen at Coeur d'Alene Charter Academy, watch an experiment in oscillating reaction Thursday through the window of their physical science class. The experiment is set up outside due to a lack of hood fan in the lab. Despite having less than state-of-the-art facilities and tools, Coeur d'Alene Charter Academy was named one of the Top 100 high schools in the nation recently by U.S. News and World Report. Cd'A Charter Academy ranked in nation's top 100

COEUR d'ALENE -- When it comes to high schools, Coeur d'Alene Charter Academy is among the best.

Again.

U.S. News and World Report ranked the school 97th among the top 100 high schools in the nation in a report released today.

More than 21,000 high schools were analyzed by U.S. News for possible inclusion on its 2009 list of America's Best High Schools.

Charter Academy is the only Idaho school to make it into the top 100 and achieve the honor of being named a "Gold Medal" school.

"This is really great," said principal Dan Nicklay. "We've gotten a lot of recognition, various awards here and there, but to be one of the top 100, this is really cool."

Last year, Newsweek ranked the school the 544th best high school in a list of 1,300.

In 2007, Charter Academy was named a National Charter School of the Year by the Center for Education Reform.

The benchmarks used by U.S. News to measure the top schools are what the organization considers indicators of college readiness including high performance in reading and math, proficiency rates on standardized tests that exceed state averages and performance on Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exams.

The school functions on significantly less money than a regular public school, Nicklay said, because as a charter, the school has no taxing authority and cannot levy property taxes for supplemental funding to maintain and operate the school or for its facility needs.

The school does not receive any federal funding, no hot lunches or busing so parents have to be more involved in getting their children to school, he said.

"There is a level of investment on the parents' part that is really key," Nicklay said.

One of the first charter schools to open in Idaho after the state passed its Charter School Law in 1998, the school serves students in grades six through 12.

In 1999, Charter Academy opened with 200 students attending seventh through 10th grades in a converted pet store and garden center along Kathleen Avenue.

Opening enrollment for the 2008-2009 school year was nearly 550 with waiting lists for some grades.

Charter this: Academy rocks (Editorial)

Posted: Thursday, Dec 04, 2008 - 10:26:01 pm PST
Merry Christmas, Charter Academy.

For all your hard work, U.S. News & World Report is recognizing you as one of the very finest high schools in America: 97th in a field of some 21,000.

Charter is at the top of the magazine's charts in part because it is exemplary in preparing its students for college. As unimpressive as Charter's physical stature is, its academic standing is one of Idaho's dazzling success stories.

In those buildings and trailers seemingly cobbled together with baling wire and bubble gum, an exhilarating learning environment has been nurtured since Charter was opened in August 1999 by founder Bill Proser, who still teaches English and economics at the school. In a way, Charter is perceived as something of a stepchild in the Coeur d'Alene School District because it has its own board, works feverishly on fundraising, and scores far better than its North Idaho peers on comprehensive tests -- all as a public school. In this case, the stepchild is the object of some envy.

Why does Charter succeed to the point that it is one of the top 100 high schools in the country? It's partly because Charter hires excellent teachers and staff and demands more of its students than most other schools. It's partly because many of the best students in the region elect to go to Charter, knowing that their hard work can readily translate into scholarship offers and rewarding careers. But in our view, one of the biggest reasons Charter succeeds is because of its parents.

Charter parents are asked to help keep the lights on by donating what they can, kind of a voluntary private school tuition. They consistently pack the small gymnasium -- which doubles as the performing arts center -- for events of every kind, showing strong support for the kids' extracurricular activities. And in a more active role, Charter parents tend to invest more of their time and energy helping their students meet Charter's rigorous academic standards.

Dr. Proser, Principal Dan Nicklay, the entire staff and faculty and all of the 400 or so Charter students should take a bow on the community's highest academic stage. And behind it, all those great parents should be high-fiving each other.

FROM THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Friends for the long haul

Their cab packed with presents, two truckers finally meet their elementary pen pals

Jim Buwalda gets a hug from Vernon Stowell and his wife, Linda Lou, from Rebecca MacCoy. The Buwaldas were in Angela Milks' classroom at Rathdrum's John Brown Elementary School on Thursday. Student Colin Kelley is in the background. Jim started his correspondence with Milks' students 13 years ago. The Spokesman-Review (Photos by Jesse Tinsley The Spokesman-Review)

Alison Boggs
Staff writer
December 5, 2008

Photographs and artwork from students in a Rathdrum elementary school decorate the living room of two long-haul truckers from Mountain Home, Idaho.

Trucker Jim Buwalda has written letters and sent packages to the children in this special-education classroom for 13 years, during his cargo-hauling travels through the Lower 48. His wife, Linda Lou, another long-haul trucker, joined in the fun after their marriage three years ago.

For the first time Thursday, the Buwaldas traveled to Rathdrum and met the teachers and children they've been writing to all these years.

It might as well have been a visit from the Clausens. The cab of the Buwaldas' truck was loaded with personalized gift bags for each student, containing toys, candy and a \$10 bill. The Buwaldas gave teacher Angela Milks a digital camera for the classroom and their company, Team One Transport Inc., of Indiana, donated a digital photo printer and software for the students.

Advertisement

"This guy's generosity is unbelievable, because he's never met us," Milks said. "There's no way we can repay him."

But they tried. The children showered their trucker buddies with gifts – gingerbread cookies and chai tea mix they made and a fleece blanket with a hand-stitched fringe. They also gave the Buwaldas another framed portrait of the class for their living room wall.

The Buwaldas are two of the 2,700 truckers who participate in Trucker Buddy International, a nonprofit program for professional drivers to establish pen pal relationships with schoolchildren. Some 35 Idaho truckers participate, along with 52 from Washington. Through the monthly letters, the children learn about reading, writing, geography and commerce.

Jim Buwalda said one class asked him for water samples from across the country. So he dipped cups into rivers and lakes, eventually shipping about 50 samples for the class's science project.

But this John Brown Elementary School classroom is different, Milks said. The children struggle with basic skills and aren't able to calculate miles traveled or plot a course on a map. But the relationship is important to them, she said. The kids are overjoyed when they receive a postcard or package from the Buwaldas, and they write monthly letters to the couple. Those who can't write draw pictures, Milks said.

Vernon Stowell, 12, said he told the Buwaldas in one letter about learning to ride a bike without training wheels.

"I can't wait to see your big truck," reads another letter, posted on a bulletin board.

"Thank you for all the special gifts you send," reads another.

"It all boils down to – they appreciate it," Jim Buwalda said.

As soon as Buwalda walked in the door Thursday, 9-year-old Eric Stowell flung himself at the trucker and hugged him. Tanner Crosby grabbed Linda Buwalda's hands and jumped up and down. The children showered the couple's Chihuahua, Angel, with attention.

"With these kids, anything, everything," Linda Buwalda said. "How could you not love them?"

FROM THE MOSCOW PULLMAN DAILY NEWS (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Kibbie Dome project moving forward

Board of education approves \$10 million Wells Fargo loan
By Halley Griffin, Daily News staff writer

Posted on: Friday, December 05, 2008

The University of Idaho received approval from the Idaho State Board of Education on Thursday to take out a \$10 million construction loan to begin life-safety improvements on the Kibbie Dome.

UI Vice President for Finance and Administration Lloyd Mues said the university had planned to pay for the project with a bond but elected to pursue a short-term construction loan from Wells Fargo instead.

"We have somewhere around \$15 (million) to \$17 million of life-safety issues that we have to address in the Kibbie Dome," Mues said while traveling back to Moscow from the board of education meeting in Nampa. "We're at the point where we have to fix it or restrict its use."

The university had hoped to spend \$17 million on the improvements but was compelled to scale back the loan due to shaky bonding markets.

The board of education approved \$2 million for the design of the life-safety improvements last year.

UI Athletic Director Rob Spear said he wasn't frustrated with the change of plans from a bond to a loan.

"I feel fortunate that we're able to move forward with the project as is," Spear said.

Mues said the UI hopes to bond the project in two years if the financial markets cooperate. The \$10 million loan would be paid off with the bond.

Mues said he expects work to bring the 34-year-old building up to code to begin as soon as possible. The UI will first begin excavation to add a field-level exit on the dome's west end.

Spear said this aspect of the project will save the UI money it had expected to spend widening aisles and concourses. Adding the field-level exit will allow 35 percent of the Kibbie Dome's capacity to exit from the field, so the expansions will no longer be necessary.

The most noticeable project will be the replacement of the wood walls on the east and west ends of the dome with translucent fiberglass panels.

Mues said the walls probably won't be replaced until after the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival in February.

"The wood walls are just falling apart," Mues said, adding that holes in the walls currently are covered with tape to keep birds from flying through them.

Spear said the initial improvements are exciting because they represent the first stage of a larger dome renovation project.

He said the improvements will solve the life-safety problems, and will improve the dome's outside appearance as well.

"We're excited that that part of the project is going to happen, and it will be the momentum that we need for the other updates for the dome," Spear said.

The Kibbie Dome also needs improvements in accessibility, fire suppression, and smoke exhaust systems. These improvements won't be made until the walls have been replaced and the field-level exit has been built.

Mues said the life-safety improvements are separate from the Kibbie Dome "game-day" renovation project, which carries a \$52 million price tag.

The UI hopes to raise \$35 million through private donations. The Kibbie Dome fundraising campaign began in January.

The plans include increasing seating capacity by 3,600 seats to 20,000, lowering the playing field, updating the press box and rest rooms, adding a club room and adding VIP parking at the west end of the dome.

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FROM THE LEWISTON TRIBUNE (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Kibbie gets money for renovation

Scaled-back project wins approval of State Board of Ed

By Joel Mills

Friday, December 5, 2008

Due to tough economic times, the University of Idaho has scaled back safety improvements to its aging Kibbie Dome, reducing the initial amount it will spend from \$17 million to \$10 million.

The State Board of Education unanimously approved the smaller figure Thursday at its first-ever meeting at the newly formed College of Western Idaho in Nampa, said Lloyd Mues, the UI's financial vice president.

The UI originally planned to replace the dome's two wooden end walls, install a smoke exhaust system, expand fire sprinkler and alarm systems, enhance exit capacities and improve air handling and electrical distribution systems.

But now only additional exiting capacity at the field level of the dome's west end and the replacement of the end walls with noncombustible materials will be tackled in what has become a phased plan, Mues said.

The board had already approved \$2 million for design of the safety improvements.

"That (\$12 million total) will allow us to get going on the walls and on the exits," Mues said.

Because of the poor condition of the bonding markets, the UI will execute a short-term construction loan of \$10 million for two years through Wells Fargo, he said. After that, if the bond markets have stabilized, the university will pay off that loan through a more traditional bond.

"The current fiscal environment precluded the University's ability to seek a \$17 million bond at this point in time," materials the UI submitted to the board said. "Both (the state Division of Building Safety) and the State Fire Marshal are in agreement that this initial phase will make critically needed improvements to the Life Safety systems of the (Kibbie Dome)."

Mues said the university has let the state Permanent Building Fund know the Kibbie Dome safety improvements are a priority. He said he was hopeful any money the agency sends the UI next year will be targeted for the leftover items on the safety to-do list.

"I'm waiting with bated breath to see what they will release," he said. "I'd take whatever they'd consider giving us."

The dramatically arched, iconic structure - which is made largely of wood - has never met state fire codes since it was completed in the late 1970s.

Mues said a construction firm has been hired, design work will begin soon, and construction should begin by spring.

UI Construction Manager Butch Fullerton said Walsh Construction of Portland will act as a construction manager on the project, not a general contractor, and subcontract most of the work.

The project should wrap up by the end of 2009, Fullerton said, "but we're hoping to be at least functional for the football season next year. It's a nightmare having to work around everything that goes on in there."

The Kibbie Dome is a multipurpose facility that not only hosts Vandal football, but also basketball, track, intramural sports and the Lionel Hampton International Jazz Festival in February.

Mills may be contacted at jmills@lmtribune.com or (208) 883-0564.

LCSC to offer \$4.5 million for hall

State Board of Education approves proposal to offer to purchase all of Clearwater Hall in downtown Lewiston

By Joel Mills

Friday, December 5, 2008

Lewis-Clark State College won approval Thursday to offer College Town Developers \$4.5 million to purchase Clearwater Hall in downtown Lewiston.

The residence hall on the southwest corner of Main and Fifth streets was built as a public-private partnership in 2006, but the owner soured on the deal when it was unable to lease any of the ground-floor retail space of the four-story building.

LCSC was initially willing to buy the top three residential floors, but College Town rejected those offers.

Financial vice president Chet Herbst said he was optimistic the owner would accept the \$4.5 million for the building, which cost about \$6.2 million to build.

"They've indicated to us that was the minimum amount they would accept for the entire facility," Herbst said from southern Idaho, where he just finished attending a State Board of Education meeting at the College of Western Idaho in Nampa.

The board unanimously approved the request in open session, Herbst said, after extensive questioning of college officials during closed executive session on how LCSC would finance the purchase.

Herbst said students who live in Clearwater Hall shouldn't notice any difference if the sale goes smoothly. If the board hadn't approved the request and College Town kept looking for other ways to divest itself of the property, there was a risk students would have had to find other lodgings, he said.

"If we couldn't acquire the property, the owners didn't want to keep running the property as a residence," he said. "We're not anticipating that being a problem at this point."

The purchase would be financed through a proposed 27-year loan with an assumed interest rate of 4.9 percent, according to materials provided to the board. The loan would be repaid with student room and board fees.

Herbst said the ground floor retail space could be used by the college for program expansion, or made available for commercial use. He thought LCSC might be able to lease the space more easily because of its prominence in the valley.

College Town Developers' principal partner lives in Seattle, he said. The company used to be called ConoverBond, and was based in Spokane before it broke up.

Herbst said LCSC's two other items before the board were approved unanimously: the purchase of property at 1014 Fourth St. for \$141,000 to make way for additional parking, and the sale of two small houses next to the York House on Sixth Avenue.

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FROM THE IDAHO-PRESS TRIBUNE, NAMPA

CWI prepares to open

Alisa Angelakis
aangelakis@idahopress.com Updated 14 hours 30 minutes ago Officials: School on track to start classes in January

NAMPA — As the State Board of Education met Thursday on the College of Western Idaho campus, officials discussed preparations for its opening and expansion.

CWI President Dennis Griffin updated the board on the school's progress. He said 1,194 students had applied to the college as of Wednesday, and he discussed plans to expand outside of Canyon County. He also said he will retire Aug. 31, 2009, and that a national search to fill his position will begin soon.

Cost for resident students

- \$119 per credit
- \$1,428 for 12 credits — considered full-time

Tasks yet to be completed

- Implement a Strategic Marketing Plan.
- Establish teaching sites with high schools.
- Load and test student tracking system.
- Complete strategic plan.
- Hire full-time and adjunct faculty.

- Develop curriculum, syllabi, textbook adoptions.
- Enroll students.
- Refine the transition plan for Seland College.
- Initiate operations plan for the Seland College.
- Initiate a campus master planning process.
- Establish an Ada County Center.

Griffin said it's possible that the Columbia High School building in Nampa can also be used for CWI programs. He said high school students would be able to earn credits through the new community college. He said the concurrent credit program would be offered in high schools by the 2009 fall semester.

"The college will expand into numerous high schools and public buildings throughout the valley," he said.

Western Idaho's first community college, CWI opened enrollment for spring semester Oct. 20. Classes begin Jan. 20.

Griffin said CWI will establish an Ada County Center and that the school's board is already looking for space to lease.

Shirl Boyce, executive director of community relations for CWI, said Thursday that he hopes the college will serve more counties in the future. "A community college has a distributive nature and is intended to have buildings in several locations to help service the needs of the community," he said.

Boyce said there are 10 counties in southwestern Idaho that could conceivably make up the College of Western Idaho's service area.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna said the college is a great asset for Nampa.

"We're very privileged to have this here. I think it raises Canyon County to another level," he said.

The new community college is located near the Idaho Center at the BSU-West campus.

In addition to traditional classes, the college will offer 10 courses online spring semester and officials plan to increase the offerings in the future.

In July, BSU's Seland College of Applied Technology will transfer to CWI, and the college will begin technical and nursing programs in the fall 2009 semester.

UI Kibbie Dome to undergo safety improvements

MOSCOW, Idaho (AP) -- The state Board of Education has approved the University of Idaho's plan to borrow \$10 million to make safety improvements to the Kibbie Dome.

The approval Thursday allows the school to improve some exits so more people can get out of the dome faster. The money will also be used to replace two wooden end walls with noncombustible materials.

"We appreciate the support and approval by our regents to move forward with financing and much-needed life safety work," Lloyd Mues, vice president for finance and administration, said in a statement. "We are pleased that even during these tough economic times, we've been able to put together a sound financing plan."

He said the university will be able to meet the quarterly payments during the two-year loan.

The board had previously approved \$2 million for designing the safety improvements.

"That (\$12 million total) will allow us to get going on the walls and on the exits," Mues told The Lewiston Tribune.

The school had initially sought approval for a \$17 million loan, but scaled it back because of the tough economic times.

Mues said construction should begin this spring and could be finished by the end of 2009.

Because of the reduction in money, some improvements at the dome will be delayed, including expanding fire alarms and a fire sprinkler system, and upgrading other exits.

Mues said he hopes the university will get money from the state Permanent Building Fund to work on those projects.

"I'm waiting with bated breath to see what they will release," he said. "I'd take whatever they'd consider giving us."

FROM THE IDAHO STATESMAN

Boise State to host winter commencement Dec. 19 at Taco Bell Arena

Watch the graduation live Dec. 19

- Idaho Statesman

Edition Date: 12/04/08

About 600 graduates are expected at Boise State University's Winter Commencement at 10 a.m. Dec. 19 in the Taco Bell Arena.

No tickets are required for the ceremony, which will honor August and December graduates. Doors will open at 8:30 a.m.

The ceremony will include a processional and recessional, individual recognition of graduates, and the hooding of doctoral candidates.

For those who cannot attend in person, Boise State will broadcast the ceremony live online.

While 600 graduates are expected to participate, 1,350 are eligible for 1,420 degrees/certificates, and 249 are eligible for honors: 156 cum laude, 65 magna cum laude and 28 summa cum laude.

The student speaker is Natalie Griffin, who is earning a bachelor of science degree in health promotion. A recipient of the U.S. Army Reserve National Scholar Athlete Award, Griffin is known for her dedication on the soccer field, in the classroom and in the community. In addition to maintaining exemplary grades, she devoted at least 20 hours a week to her sport, volunteered for numerous nonprofits and completed several internships devoted to health promotion.

The Alumni Association will host a celebration for graduates, friends and families before the ceremony from 8 to 9:30 a.m. in the Bronco Gym. A reception will immediately follow the ceremony in the Student Union Building's Jordan Ballroom. Each college will have a designated area where graduates can meet family and friends after the ceremony.

FROM THE TWIN FALLS TIMES-NEWS

Avoiding a cram session

TFSD eyes new elementary, junior high plans within three years

By Ben Botkin

Times-News writer

The completion of Canyon Ridge High School in Twin Falls will not end planning for new schools in the Twin Falls School District.

The city's proposed comprehensive plan, Twin Falls Vision 2030, projects a continued growth in the school district's enrollment in the years ahead. The comprehensive plan, a 197-page document, is intended to be a guide for the city's future and planning efforts.

For the Twin Falls School District, the future has substantial student growth in the years ahead. Enrollment at Twin Falls schools is projected to reach 11,261 by 2020, up from about 7,600 students currently.

In the long term, that means the school district will need another elementary school and junior high, Superintendent Wiley Dobbs said.

"There's a lot of planning that will need to be done," he said.

The school district will spend 2009 finishing up Canyon Ridge High School and getting settled into the new facility. Beyond 2009, the district will need to form a committee that will look at needs for the two future schools, Dobbs said, adding that the committee is about two or three years away from the start of its work.

Mitch Humble, community development director for Twin Falls, said the goal of the comprehensive plan is not to tell the school district what to do. Instead, it's to set the general course for how the city intends to grow, he said.

"I don't think it's this plan's purpose to plan out how the school district needs to grow," he said. "That's more of a school district decision. ... We're going to let them decide when and what to build."

For now, it's too soon to know where the new schools will be. But the school district already owns land at several locations: off of Hankins Road on the city's east end, on the south end along 3600 North Road, and near the Sunway Soccer Complex on the west side.

Those are possible sites, Dobbs said, adding that the land could always be sold or traded if the schools are built elsewhere.

As for the future of the College of Southern Idaho, growth on the north end of the campus is likely in the long-term future, said John Miller, an instruction dean at CSI. The new health sciences and human services building currently under construction is an example, he said.

The Twin Falls City Council will have a public hearing in January for the comprehensive plan.

Ben Botkin may be reached at 208-735-3238 or bbotkin@magicvalley.com.

Vailas' medical school enthusiasm doesn't trump state economics (Editorial)

Idaho State University doesn't offer a degree in magic, but maybe it should.

ISU President Art Vailas is plowing ahead with ambitious plans to offer Idaho's first medical degree program, despite an order by Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter this week to cut another 3 percent from state budgets already whittled down by 1 percent in September.

"We're not asking the state for money," he said Wednesday.

That's good. There isn't any.

ISU's med school would require \$21 million in startup money, which the university plans to cover with a loan, and would plan to enroll 60 medical students each year beginning as soon as 2012, Vailas said.

Nor has anyone in authority actually told Vailas that ISU can have a med school.

Undaunted, the president plans to pitch it to the state Board of Education next year. If it passes, ISU could accept students as soon as 2012.

"At some point, somebody has to give us the green light," Vailas said.

Actually, they don't. There's deep and abiding skepticism among Idahoans who don't live in Bannock County that the state can afford a med school, or actually needs one.

Last year, Vailas pushed lawmakers to spend \$300,000 to study creating the state's first medical degree program. The report, produced by an independent Florida-based consulting firm, concluded that Idaho could address a growing shortage of doctors by adding a medical school or by expanding residency programs.

Or Idaho could opt for an even more cost-effective alternative: Buying more slots for Idahoans in the medical school at the University of Washington and the University of Utah.

Under Vailas' plan, ISU would train medical students through existing health science courses during their first two years. Students would spend their last two years at clinical sites in Idaho for hands-on training.

Give the president credit for thinking outside the box, but it's not possible for Idaho to have a med school without a large and ongoing investment by the taxpayers.

And the consent of the folks responsible for public education in Idaho.

FROM THE IDAHO STATE JOURNAL (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Cutting truancy

Magistrate Judge Bryan Murray has a truancy court to help curtail the increasing problem in schools. District seeks to hire officers to trim absenteeism

BY CASEY SANTEE
csantee@journalnet.com

POCATELLO — School District 25 is seeking state funding to hire truancy officers, who would patrol popular youth hangouts to catch habitually absent students.

Jim Harrell, director of student services, said the officers would give teeth to a more stringent district attendance policy enacted at the start of the school year.

“With No Child Left Behind, we are being held accountable for teaching students, but we can’t do that if they aren’t in school,” Harrell said.

Harrell said the truancy officers are needed because, currently, school resource officers, counselors and attendance staff are responsible for keeping track of absent students in addition to their regular duties.

That’s a tall order, officials say, with the stricter attendance policy implemented by the school board.

Prior to the 2008-2009 school year, students often accrued dozens of absences before corrective action was taken, Harrell said.

“If I am working at (ON Semiconductor) and I just don’t show up to work for two days, then I get terminated,” Harrell said. “Then why let kids pile up absences without consequences? What is that teaching them?”

“You’d be appalled at how many kids miss 20-30 days per semester.”

Under the new attendance policy, every absence following the ninth can result in a truancy for middle and high school students. Upon receiving the first truancy, students meet with the school principal to review the situation and outline a solution.

Those who get a second truancy attend Friday night school, in which they meet with a school counselor and discuss goal setting. The third results in parents attending night school with their children.

The fourth leads to a disciplinary hearing with district officials, including Harrell, who can refer students to truancy court, where Juvenile Judge Bryan Murray gets involved.

During each weekly session, Murray said about a dozen students participate in his truancy court.

Murray describes the court, started this year in conjunction with the school district’s new attendance policy, as a diversion program that prevents children from ending up on formal probation with a conviction for truancy on their juvenile records.

“The students are responding well,” Murray said. “Their attendance usually goes from horrible to perfect, and their grades improve.”

Truancy court works in steps, much like the school district’s attendance policy.

Students start by visiting with judge Murray regularly every Tuesday afternoon. If they show progress, Murray sees them every other week and then once per month.

Often following an initial evaluation, the judge gets them tutoring, counseling or medical services to address underlying issues that contribute to the truancy problem.

Harrell said the truancy officers would serve as an extra set of eyes and ears for the school district in the community.

"When you hear the words truancy officer, you get the image of guys going around hammering kids. People think of it as punitive, but I see it as another resource to keep kids in school where they belong," Harrell said. "I understand where (students) are coming from. I'd rather be out doing whatever I want, too. But I have to work within parameters."

FROM THE IDAHO FALLS POST REGISTER (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Holding history's hand

Program brings students, WWII vets together

By SAMANTHA PAK spak@postregister.com

If you could go back and spend time with any person in history, who would it be and what would you ask him or her?

Seventh-grade reading teacher Sonya Pearson often asks those questions of her students at Clair E. Gale Junior High School.

On Thursday, Pearson's students had a chance to live out their teacher's rhetorical questions when they participated in a lunch and reception for veterans who fought in World War II.

Thursday's ceremony, called Holding the Hand of History, was a culmination of a monthlong effort in which Pearson's charges pored over books about the war. While they professed to learn a ton through their research, the lunch provided students with the opportunity -- one that won't always be there -- to spend time with people who experienced the war firsthand, talk with them and ask them questions.

"(These students) will probably be the last generation to get to know these men," Pearson said.

When she started planning Thursday's event, Pearson expected only a few veterans. After asking her friends and family to help with her search, however, nearly 20 veterans -- most in their 80s -- attended the lunch.

It took about two weeks to plan, and the students contributed by baking cookies and brownies for the reception in Clair E. Gale's home economics classroom and decorating the school Wednesday night.

Many teachers stayed after school to supervise.

"They've been really excited," Principal Robin Busch said.

Seventh-grader Anna Kimbro was among those who couldn't contain her excitement at learning about history from those who lived through it.

"I was interested in learning about the wives," Kimbro said, referring to the women who worked for the first time and took "Rosie the Riveter"-type jobs after many men left to fight overseas.

When the veterans arrived Thursday morning, they were greeted with a round of applause from students, staff and other guests.

Some of the veterans arrived in a limousine that pulled right up to the doors leading to the cafeteria.

A few wore uniforms adorned with medals and awards they earned while serving.

Many brought artifacts such as war ration books, old photos and photo books. There was even a copy of the front page of the Post Register from the day the war ended.

Events such as these that honor veterans give army veteran Robert Cox a good feeling -- something the Rigby resident said everyone could use a lot more of. The 88-year-old and his wife, Doris, brought in the war ration books and the V-Day edition of the Post Register.

Cox was 22 when he first joined the Army in 1943. The couple married at the end of 1946, after the war ended.

During the event, students asked veterans a slew of questions about their time in the military, which branch they served in, their contributions during the war and their overall experiences during that time.

Jack Parry, another Army veteran, said it's good for young people to learn about things that happened before their time because history can repeat itself. Parry, 84, served between 1943 and 1946 and attended the lunch with his wife, Lois.

"I appreciate these young people," Parry said. "I hope they know what a great country this is."

Reporter Samantha Pak can be reached at 542-6750.

Did you know?

Sunday is the 67th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. The Japanese attack killed 2,400 Americans, sunk five of the eight battleships in the U.S. fleet's base there and plunged the U.S. into World War II.